



The President's Daily Brief

April 19, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

April 19, 1975

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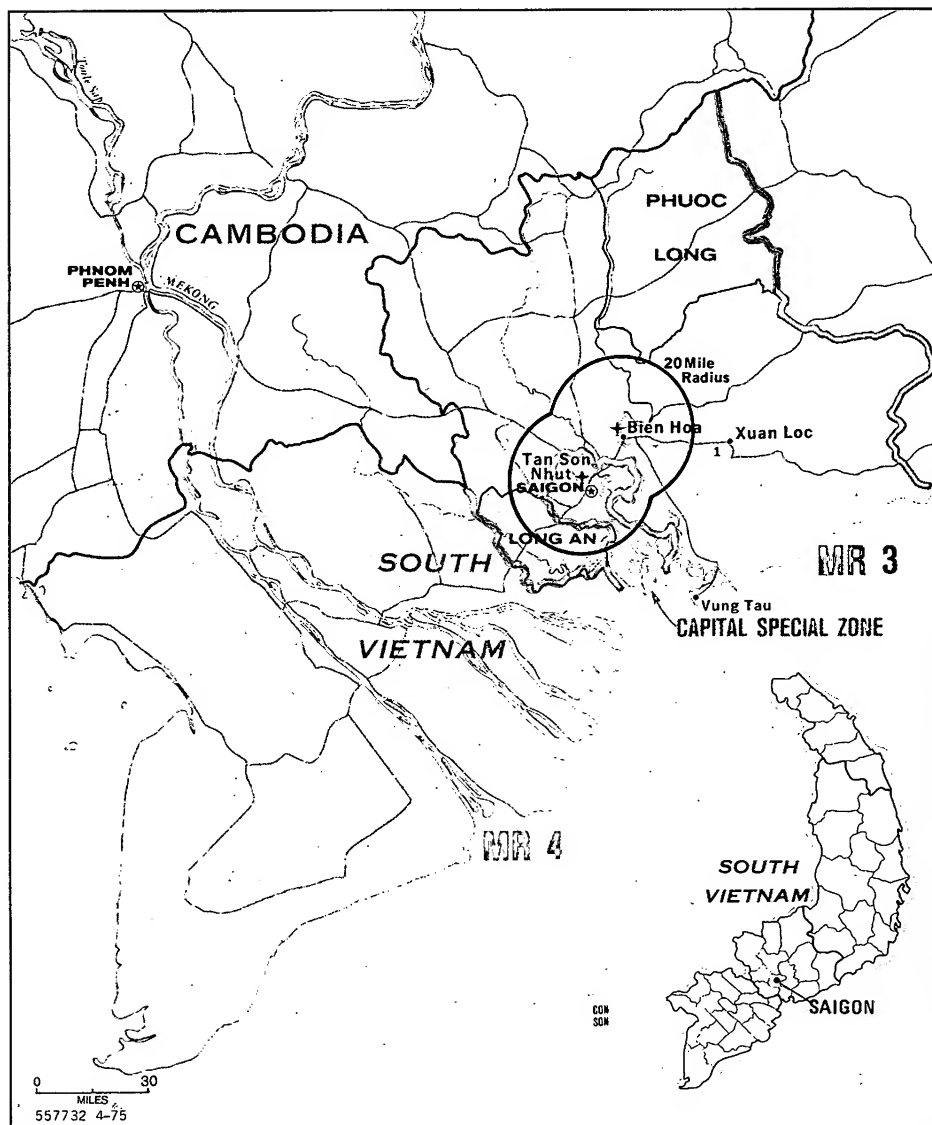
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SOUTH VIETNAM

The communists are tightening their noose around Saigon. In a matter of days, they will have 17 full divisions to commit against remaining government positions defending the capital and the delta, and will outnumber the government forces by about two-to-one.

The South Vietnamese have only seven divisions left and many of these have recently been hard hit. Three other divisions are in the process of rebuilding, but they will not be ready for combat in the next few critical days. Moreover, communist artillery attacks are threatening to close down government airbases close to the capital. Without air support, the South Vietnamese will be outgunned as well as outmanned.

At Xuan Loc, on the eastern end of Saigon's defense line, South Vietnamese forces are still crumbling in the face of sustained communist attacks. It appears likely that the South Vietnamese 18th Division and an Airborne brigade will be lost. At least one of the attacking communist divisions--the North Vietnamese 6th--already has pulled away from Xuan Loc and is swinging to the south, either headed for Vung Tau or around the government's southern flank and on toward Saigon.

A large gap in the defensive perimeter of Bien Hoa was filled yesterday when a brigade of Marines was moved into blocking positions to the north of the city. Despite airstrikes against North Vietnamese artillery positions, the Bien Hoa airbase has been hit again with large-caliber artillery and rockets.

To the south and west of Saigon, the communists are bringing the fight closer to the capital. During the past two days, a flurry of communist attacks in Long An Province spread to the outskirts of the capital. A number of smaller positions were overrun and many others were hit hard with shellings and ground attacks.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the communists were [REDACTED] in a position to put military pressure on his forces which could not possibly be contained. [REDACTED] reserves, including parts of the Airborne Division, have taken heavy casualties, are exhausted, and cannot fight much longer.

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The communists are threatening to close down the government's two large airbases at Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut. The Bien Hoa airfield has already been hit by 122-mm. artillery, which has a range of 13 miles; the communists also possess the heavier 130-mm. field gun, which is accurate up to 17 miles. The North Vietnamese may also be moving SA-2 surface-to-air missiles toward the bases. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The SA-2 missile, which is normally effective against aircraft above 1,000 feet, has a range of just under 20 miles.

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CAMBODIA

Radio Phnom Penh has been off the air since late Thursday. The French government's representative there is maintaining the only contact with the outside; he apparently is staying inside the French embassy compound and has provided few details on the communist occupation.

The French diplomat did report yesterday that all French newsmen were safe, thus casting some doubt on a rumor that the communists had executed 21 journalists.

Intercepted messages confirm that the communists are evacuating large numbers of civilians from the city. Most who have left are apparently headed for provinces north of the capital. The evacuation will reduce the capital's population to a more manageable level but will complicate any international relief effort.

There is no indication yet that senior Khmer communist leaders have entered Phnom Penh to set up a new regime. Their occupation plans call for the establishment of a temporary "revolutionary council" to consolidate control in the city, and press reports indicate that a "council" has been formed.

Prince Sihanouk is in Peking where he has received numerous congratulatory messages.

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations--Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines--yesterday announced joint recognition of Sihanouk's government. Laos and Portugal made similar announcements. Japan followed suit today, even though Sihanouk had told a Japanese newsman that any such move would be rebuffed because of Tokyo's past support for the Lon Nol government.

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CHINA-CAMBODIA

Peking's major statements yesterday on the "liberation" of Phnom Penh re-emphasize China's solidarity with the rebels and the importance Peking attaches to Prince Sihanouk's past and future role in Cambodia.

An authoritative People's Daily editorial declared that the Cambodian people were successful because they rallied around a united front that included Sihanouk as well as the communists. Expressing its interest in Sihanouk's future role, the editorial asserted that the united front, formally chaired by Sihanouk, and the royal government "represents the interests of the Cambodian people."

Moreover, Peking's congratulatory message from Chairman Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders was addressed to "head-of-state" Sihanouk, as well as to the prime minister and deputy prime minister of the royal government. These references clearly indicate that Peking expects the Prince to play a significant role in Phnom Penh; they may also mean that the Chinese hope to preempt any possible move to shunt Sihanouk aside.

The thrust of the Chinese statements is that Peking should be considered the new regime's most consistent ally. The editorial specifically contrasts Chinese support with the duplicity of the Soviets. The editorial carefully balanced criticism of the US role in Cambodia with an attack on the Soviets for supporting Lon Nol until the last minute. It said Moscow had been exposed as "a political gambler who has lost his all."

Neither the editorial nor the congratulatory message makes any direct reference to Hanoi--an indication that the Chinese may expect to find themselves in competition with the North Vietnamese for influence in Phnom Penh.

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CHINA-KOREA

Peking appears to be setting down a moderate tone for North Korean President Kim Il-song's visit, which began on Thursday.

Although the reasons for Kim's visit are not yet clear, the importance that the Chinese attach to it is obvious from the massive welcome Kim received and the fact that Kim met with Mao--in the Chairman's first appearance in three months--only hours after he arrived in Peking. The very fact that Kim has traveled to China, for his first official visit in 14 years, in itself suggests that issues of importance to both countries are under discussion.

A People's Daily editorial that appeared the day before Kim's arrival in Peking pledged support for the "correct policy" of peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. Treatment of the US role in Korea was perfunctory; the only reference to US troops in the south was a pro forma statement that they "must be withdrawn."

The editorial drew no connection between recent events in Indochina and the Kim visit. In fact, the references to "peaceful reunification," as well as the relatively restrained criticism of Seoul, strongly suggest that Peking is in no mood to support any thoughts Kim may have about increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula.

If Kim is in Peking to engage in military discussions--military aid negotiator O Chin-u was included in the talks with Mao--the Chinese will be careful in their response because of concern that the North Koreans will turn to the Soviets if they are cold-shouldered in Peking. Although Moscow has shown no disposition to encourage any Korean adventurism, the Chinese are especially sensitive to Soviet relations with Pyongyang.

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JORDAN

King Husayn and his prime minister have recently been pursuing a more activist foreign policy highlighted by closer contacts with Syria and a less hostile attitude toward communist states.

Within the past six weeks Jordan has:

--Embarked on an unprecedented, close relationship with Syria, including wide-ranging economic and trade agreements and active military and political consultations.

--Advertised its intention of seeking Soviet air defense equipment from Syria if its requests for US equipment are not met quickly.

--Entertained several Soviet economic and political delegations and lavishly welcomed Romanian President Ceausescu.

--Approved bids for diplomatic representation by Yugoslavia, East Germany, and North Korea.

In another of his periodic rounds of major army units this month, the King stressed the threat of war, Jordan's military needs, and its solidarity with other Arab states in demanding that Israel return Jerusalem and the West Bank to Arab control. He has been unusually strident on the subject of Jerusalem, and made a point of raising it during the official reception for Ceausescu.

[redacted] concern about the direction of Jordanian policy, fearing that the country will be drawn into costly entanglements abroad when it should be concentrating on internal development.

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[redacted] if the King turns to Syria for air defense weapons, Syrian advisers might be stationed in Jordan.

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Jordan's increasing involvement with Syria could invite a war with Israel for which the army and air force are unprepared.

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The King and Prime Minister Rifai are due in Washington at the end of this month for a discussion of Jordan's military and economic needs, and much of their recent activity is designed to focus US attention on their aid requests. But their efforts to diversify and strengthen Jordan's foreign ties reflect a genuine concern that the US can neither prevent another Middle East war by a new diplomatic initiative nor provide Jordan with the means it considers vital to its defense.

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PANAMA CANAL TREATY

We present below the precis of a National Intelligence Estimate, "Panama Canal Treaty: The Likely Consequences of Certain Contingent Developments," which was approved by the United States Intelligence Board yesterday.

The purpose of this paper is to estimate probable reactions in Panama to three assumed outcomes of the present canal negotiations. The paper does not estimate the chances for successful conclusion of the ongoing negotiations, nor does it address the negotiating positions of the parties.

Scenario 1: A treaty is signed and both sides begin the ratification process.

The Panamanian government will be able to obtain ratification of a treaty that Torrijos endorses and energetically supports.

--Ratification in accordance with the 1972 constitution could come in as little as three months.

--Torrijos will probably act before the Senate does, hoping, among other objectives, to influence that body and to place the onus for rejection on the US.

A treaty signed and ratified by Panama could be denounced by a future Panamanian government, but this is unlikely.

Scenario 2: A treaty is signed, but the US Senate fails to act upon it for an extended period or refuses to approve it.

Extended Delay

Panama's reaction will depend on Torrijos' perception of the reasons for the delay and of the chances for eventual ratification, and on the extent of his continuing confidence in the US executive branch.

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--Under the best of circumstances, he would have difficulty living with an extended delay.

--Within a year or less, under growing nationalist pressure, Torrijos would openly criticize the delay, and there would be demonstrations and some harassment of US personnel.

--As long as he believed the door remained open for ratification, he would control the level of the Panamanian response.

Refusal to Ratify

Nationalistic feelings would be ignited and violence and rioting against US personnel and installations would occur.

As the initial disorders run their course, Panama would undertake more calculated actions designed to make operation of the canal difficult.

--There would be harassment and hostile acts, such as closure of the Canal Zone borders, and US personnel would be in physical danger.

--Terrorist groups would try to carry out acts against US interests.

--Torrijos would probably break diplomatic relations with the US and denounce the 1903 treaty.

International support for Panama would be extensive, particularly in Latin America.

--The prospects for an effective multilateral dialogue with Latin America would be dealt a severe blow, and the climate for bilateral relations would be adversely affected.

--Regional organizations excluding the US would be given impetus.

The Torrijos government would probably survive, and any future negotiations with Panama would be considerably more difficult.

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Scenario 3: The negotiators cannot agree on an acceptable treaty and the talks break down.

If Torrijos perceived that talks might be resumed on his terms, he would maintain a responsible image.

If talks were not resumed fairly soon, Panama would resort to tactics like those described in the case of Senate rejection.

Torrijos would move quickly to such tactics if he concluded at the outset that there was no hope for renewed negotiations.

The chances are greater in this scenario that he would feel duped. This would lead to:

--A more emotional and aggressive response.

--A greater government role in organizing and directing it, and a greater chance of participation by members of the National Guard.

--Less prospect for meaningful communication between the US and Panama.

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